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Patti Callahan Henry

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When Hunter and Ella meet in Watersend, South Carolina, it feels like the perfect match, something close to fate. In Ella, Hunter finds the perfect love story, full of longing and sacrifice. It's the stuff of epic films. In Hunter, Ella finds possibility. It's an opportunity to live out a fantasy – the life she wishes she had because hers is too painful. And more real. Besides. what's a little white lie between strangers?

But one lie leads to another, and soon Hunter and Ella find themselves caught in a web of deceit. As they try to untangle their lies and reclaim their own lives, they feel something stronger is keeping them together. And so they wonder: can two people come together for all the wrong reasons and still make it right?

The Idea of Love Details

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From Reader Review The Idea of Love for online ebook

Judy Collins says

A special thank you to St. Martin's Press and NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

THE IDEA OF LOVE by master storyteller, *Patti Callahan Henry*, a contemporary magical story of unexpected love and life (*with a beautiful front cover drawing you in*) -- of two people searching for something, and the lengths they go to find it. A journey of reinvention, and finding what really matters in life, *mixed with wit and southern humor*.

One man is searching for a love story to save his career. A woman is searching for a love she had and lost, both pretending to be someone and something else, hiding behind a facade -- When the real "flawed" person may be just what the other needs. *What if love is more of an idea than a real thing? If it was just an idea we carry around, why the weight of sadness?*

Set in Watersend, SC in the coastal Low Country, Ella thought she had it all-- a beautiful home, a loving husband, her friends, her life, and her things. However, one day, her husband chose someone else and her life was over, or so she thought. How could she have missed the signs of a mistress, especially her best friend's sister? To complicate matters, it is her husband's house, so she had to be the one to move, into a dump furnished apartment with little money. Now no friends, no life, no husband, no home, no possessions. She dreams constantly of getting her home, her things, her husband back. *Is it an idea of love she wants, or the cheating man himself?*

Screenwriter Hunter (Blake) from LA needs a hit, and his last several movies are not cutting it. He has writer's block and desperately needing a good love story for his next film. He needs inspiration. His personal love life has not been so smooth either. He decides to go about it pretending he is a travel writer of history books, a coffee table book, when he meets Ella at the coffee shop to draw out a story—fate steps in. However, the story he is writing is not really her real story but only a made up version.

Ella does not want anyone to know of her sad "loser" life, so she makes up this huge story that her loving husband died in a boating accident going after her hat, sacrificing himself for her, and now she is a grieving widow. She makes him think she is a successful wedding designer, and lives at the home where she lived previously with white picket fence, perfect. No way she would allow him to see where she really lives. She actually works at a bridal shop running errands for her boss. She has a portfolio, but her boss does not think she has talent, or does she?

They both are being untruthful with one another, with lies upon lies, but at the time, they do not count on seeing each other in the future – like a few white lies, who will know? However, the more Ella sees Hunter, the more she actually enjoys herself and at the same time, Hunter is getting a possible good story and likes this person, or the person he thinks she is.

Ella is living in a rundown furnished apartment with a neighbor who has a barking loud dog. When she goes over to the neighbor's house, she meets Mimi. Mimi is an older woman who lives alone with her dog. She previously owned a successful bookstore in town and had it all. Now she resides in this broken down old apartment, but somehow she loves her life and has a great attitude – full of optimistic hope.

Mimi has learned to live with the now, not the future, or the past. She has experienced great loss in her

time with her personal and professional life. Ella likes her outlook on life, and is drawn to the woman and becomes her friend, letting her in on her secret of lies. Mimi lost everything, yet she is getting along OK-- She escaped to a world of books, so her books and friends filled her life, and they still do.

Mimi accepts the unacceptable. How can this woman be so wise? Does accepting mean you recognize, you can't do anything about it. You cannot fix it. You cannot change someone's heart. You cannot make someone love you. Only YOU have what you're looking for. Mimi's wise words, "There is always something you can do, say, create, read, breathe, eat, make, laugh, and then—who knows what—something always happens next."

All Ella really wants to do is design wedding dresses at Swept Away, the premier wedding boutique in the Low Country. She had been there for six months and hired by Margo the owner to learn all the departments from the ground up. Margo is a designer and Ella had taken her designs more than once to Margo with her saying that's sweet and nothing more. She was sick of brides every day, and she was sick of living in a crap apartment and she cannot imagine a happy ending. It was a curse.

However, she soon may find the old life and the perfect home may not necessarily add up to real love. There are other unresolved issues with her mother's death and the way she treated her father Ella has to make right. When something happens at work and her personal life, she steps up to the plate to attain what she wants with confidence and passion. Could there be a future for this odd couple with their fake identities? *Fun, fun . . . Reinvention time, and possibly some life left for these two.*

"A release, a surge of energy, rose from Ella's chest. The hole that had been there, the one she thought she needed to fill with him, now filled with something else. Strength and resilience. A sense of her own worth. It wasn't him she wanted back; it was love she wanted. Love."

I loved Mimi's character, with her mean pound cake, and her bourbon which offers a cure for everything wrong in the world, and her visits with Ella.

A long time fan of *Patti Callahan Henry*, one of the top writer's in the Southeast, of women's fiction, have read all her books and she never disappoints; each time she delivers more than a chicklit, or women's fiction, there is always a heartfelt message and takeaway, which remains with you long after the books ends.

Fans of *Dorothea Benton Frank, Mary Alice Monroe, Wendy Wax, Mary Kay Andrews, Beth Hoffman, Sarah Pekkanen, and Susan Rebecca White*, will enjoy this warmhearted contemporary southern tale of unexpected love and important life lessons. *Do not rely so much on others to make your happiness – create your own.*

On a personal note: I had to laugh about *John Smoltz (being an Atlanta gal most of my life prior to Florida)* and served on the board of directors for years with YES! Atlanta, *Youth Experiencing Success* with at-risk teens, and sponsorship chairman for our annual Outback Steakhouse Braves Golf Tournament--have so many photos with the baseball star, and yes, unfortunately guys in the south do love their sports, and obsessed with baseball cards!

Judith D. Collins Must Read Books

Julie says

The Idea of Love by Patti Callahan Henry is a St. Martin's Press publication.

I'm a sucker for a good romantic comedy, and this book pays homage, in a charming way, to that genre. Although 'Harry Met Sally' is the main example this book points to a time or two, one of my favorite Romcoms is 'While you Were Sleeping', and this story put me in mind of it because an unintentional relationship occurs based on a falsehood. While this story doesn't offer up belly laughs exactly, the dialogue is sweet and charming, but with bittersweet poignancy, too.

Ultimately, the conclusion is delightful, as Ella pulls herself together, waking up from her daze, taking control of her life and her own happiness.

This is a magical, touching story, filled with enchanting southern charm!

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To read the review in full, click on this link:<https://www.nightowlreviews.com/v5/Re...>

Dana says

"The Idea of Love" was not a bad book, but after reading seven of Patti Callahan Henry's prior books, -all but one, to date, I felt this was her weakest novel. It differed in tone and style from the others, and not in a positive way. The writing was not as lyrical and beautiful. The characters were not as sympathetic and were harder to love. Perhaps if I had not read the other books, I might not be so critical, but I did, and so I am! Lies and more lies rest between two nearly broken souls who meet in a small town in the deep south and build something, feel something, yearn for something deeper than the lies of which neither is aware. A woman whose husband cheated on her recreates her tale turning herself into a widow who lost her true "once in a lifetime" love. A Hollywood screenwriter down on his luck with a few failures behind him, recreates himself as an unknown novelist who simply wants to interview the locals of the small town to gain fodder for his next novel. Are the emotion connections between liars real? What happens when the truth is revealed, as it always will be? An interesting premise, a cast of flawed and not so nice characters, and a few surprises kept me reading, but I can't sing the praises of PCH's most recent novel. One out of eight isn't bad, so I will remain a devoted fan and anxiously await whatever she writes next.

Maryellen says

Love. *"We can't keep using it to describe everything from hamburgers to best friends to spouses to moms. It's not the same damn thing."*

Lies. *"Don't let the truth get in the way of a good story"*

Ella Flynn believes in love. She loves her husband. She shouldn't. He's a jerk. Blake Hunter is a playwright

who will do anything to find a love story. He'll lie. And then he meets his match and he gets what he gives. Lies.

Set in the small town of Watersend, South Carolina, where the sweet smell of wisteria and southern charm can soften even the hardest hearts, **THE IDEA OF LOVE** is a story about the edge of right where it blurs into the margins of wrong. I love this story. I love Ella and her vulnerability. I love Blake and his rough edges. Are they meant to be? Or did they ruin their one shot at love, not just the idea of it, by building a friendship on a foundation of lies?

Get swept away in this story. There's so much chaos in the world right now and reading this book seemed to slow down time just a little bit.

4.5 Stars

Tanja ~ T's Book ~ KT Book Reviews says

There comes a time in everyone's life, a tipping point, when an earth shattering event or information shifts who you are and how you feel about yourself. Sometimes we can't predict or even see these changes happening around us. When we do, however, see those changes, feel them, and embrace them, it dictates the way we think, speak, and ultimately hold our own hearts.

The Idea of Love is a self discovery for the broken hearted Ella. She has been the thoughtful and ever steadfast wife. They have had a great relationship and a fantastic sex life. So when her husband comes home professing his love for her best friends little sister, everything just crumbles from beneath her. Ella's normal is no more.

Hunter, a screenwriter from Hollywood has decided to spend some time looking for a muse of sorts. He needs that next big movie hit. One he hopes to find while talking to people along his travels. Looking for stories of love from those he meets and trying to compose a story, when he sees the lovely yet seemingly broken Ella, he finds his winning story. He didn't expect to find this woman's story so captivating. Funny enough, what she shares with Hunter isn't her real story.

Too bad these two have lied to each other about who they really are. I know, I know, you're thinking: "What does this have to do with self-discovery? It sounds like a quirky movie script!" Whelp, it really has more to do with Ella and how she decides to handle her husband's deceit and her own towards this new friendship. Life is hard and it's messy. Ella has to discover her inner strength and what she expects in return from those around her. She can sit back and let life happen to her or she can make life happen on her own terms., all the while being her best possible self. Whether she includes a cheating husband or a new found friend remains to be seen.

In the simplest of terms, I ADORED this read. I found it to be fun, full of heart, and inspiring.

5 STAR READ!

This would be my movie poster :-)

Adored the book! ADORED!

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Chrissy says

It all started with a little white lie...

Hunter is a screenwriter in need of a story. He visits a sleepy little town, hoping to interview its community in search of something to spark his next big hit. Posing as a serious author of historical and travel works, Hunter manages to get the attention of a beautiful young woman with a captivating story...

Ella can't bear to face the truth of her husband's affair, so she invents an amazing story that portrays his death in a heroic light. When an author comes to research her town, she figures there's no harm in sharing the realities that she has spun to comfort herself. So, she tells great tales of a noble man who died rescuing his young wife...

When Hunter and Ella learn that they may, together, be creating the start of a magical love story, each has a horrifying truth to confront. Are they each too infatuated with the idea of love to be able to imagine its reality? Or, will these little white lies be enough to destroy the possibilities of a bright tomorrow?

The Idea of Love by Patti Callahan Henry is a feel-good romance with an extra bit of heart and soul, featuring two fairly unlikeable characters who seem destined to be stuck in their own imaginations. I can't deny that it was hard to feel attached to individuals who seemed so intent on living a lie, but the possibility of character growth and development was enough to keep me reading until the end.

For anyone who loves a story of characters overcoming their personal demons to find a happy ending, The Idea of Love would probably be an excellent choice -- as long as you don't mind a few irritatingly frustrating characters along the way.

I did receive a copy of The Idea of Love for the purposes of providing a complete and honest review. All thoughts are my own and are not influenced by the manner in which the book was received.

3.5 stars

Stephanie says

Enjoyable fluff.

It was a page turner.

Laurel-Rain says

When Ella Flynn and Blake Hunter met in Watersend, South Carolina, they each had their own agenda, and they were each telling little white lies.

Ella, who was a resident of the town, had shared with Blake, who was calling himself Hunter Adderman and posing as a writer of history: "Don't let the truth get in the way of a good story." She had no idea that "Hunter" had already begun following that particular piece of advice.

Maybe the little white lies were harmless. But before we can answer the question of what would happen to the two story tellers, we are shown how each of them manages to keep the truth out of things...until it was no longer possible.

Why would Blake Hunter, a screen writer from LA, tell such a fabrication? And why would Ella, whose husband left her for her best friend's sister, want to make up her own version of events?

Would the perfect love story Blake believes he has discovered put him back on the top, after two movie flops? Could Ella find love again, or must she settle for just the idea of it?

"The Idea of Love: A Novel" was a charming but somewhat superficial tale about all the things that can go wrong with love, and how trying and persevering can make all the difference. Along the way, we get to watch Ella redefine what she wants in life, including a life in which she is a wedding dress designer. She gets to reassess everything she thought she knew and believed about love...and friendship. The story was a fun and quick read. 4.0 stars.

Tonya says

As we like to say in the south: "Don't let the truth get in the way of a good story."

Ella's life has been completely upended. She's young, beautiful, and deeply in love—until her husband dies in a tragic sailing accident while trying save her. Or so she'll have everyone believe. Screenwriter Hunter needs a hit, but crippling writers' block and a serious lack of motivation are getting him nowhere. He's on the look-out for a love story. It doesn't matter who it belongs to.

When Hunter and Ella meet in Watersend, South Carolina it feels like the perfect match, something close to fate. In Ella, Hunter finds the perfect love story, full of longing and sacrifice. It's the stuff of epic films. In Hunter, Ella finds possibility. It's an opportunity to live out a fantasy – the life she wishes she had because hers is too painful. And more real. Besides. what's a little white lie between strangers?

But one lie leads to another, and soon Hunter and Ella find themselves caught in a web of deceit. As they try to untangle their lies and reclaim their own lives, they feel something stronger is keeping them together. And so they wonder: can two people come together for all the wrong reasons and still make it right?

--My thoughts. This turned out to be more than I expected. It was more than a cute love story. It makes you think about what started out as little lies, for both of them, spun into something that ended up big. For Blake, Ella thinks he is just a writer of historic books, but he is a screen writer, looking to have a comeback in the love film department. Ella's husband fell in love with her best friend's sister, and so now she is living in a dump of an apartment, not sure what to do with her life.

When they collide, they both start telling lies and what happens after that you won't believe! Nothing like a good love story. Mimi is my favorite though. Friendships are the best, especially when you really are not searching for one.

Also, Ella and her job. Made me really mad! I think Ella learned a lot about herself, and it makes you think, we need to be not so passive/aggressive but take more of a positive role in our lives.

This book was so amazing, I really am glad I read it!

Laura Kay Bolin says

Patti Callahan Henry writes with perfect Southern charm. She writes the South how I see it and feel it. Ella Flynn has had a rough time lately. Her husband left her, her job sorta sucks and she lives in a less than par apartment. When Hunter Adderman or aka Blake Hunter introduces himself as a freelancer writing about small southern towns, Ella shares a different picture of her life. Believing this was a one time only meeting- what could it hurt? Their story begins with a lie, then another lie and another. Both spinning stories to the other. They begin building a friendship on falsehoods and half truths. All the while, Ella is trying to get her real life on track to what she believes is her ideal life. Hunter/Blake is looking to put his career back on track. Their friendship is a true friendship, a true connection built on untruths. Soon enough the house of cards falls down all around them. The feelings are real, but where can that lead to when you can't trust the other.

I overall enjoyed THE IDEA OF LOVE. It was well written, but it fell short for me with the two main characters. I very much enjoyed all the supporting characters and secondary stories. I just couldn't really connect to Ella. I didn't dislike her, but I didn't find her compelling. She has this great guy, but she is obsessed with an idea. It wasn't until she started getting a backbone that I could root for her. It just seemed like everyone in her 'real' life treated her poorly and without any respect from her former Bff, her boss, and someone else (you have to read the book to find out who). Then you know Hunter/Blake is lying to her too. Sorta using her and yet falling for her or her story? So I couldn't really like him cause he believes her sob story, but he is still willing to use it. This was definitely a different sort of love story. Like I said, I really enjoyed Henry's writing and the stories surrounding the main story. I just didn't love it. I will definitely read more from her and I'm sure others will really enjoy the story--it was more I didn't enjoy the concept of the story.

Katherine Jones says

Novelists set themselves a particular challenge when they begin a story with two unsympathetic protagonists. On the plus side, this gives the characters plenty of scope for growth. The downside, however, is that it makes it hard for readers to want to stick with characters who are rather unlikable. Harder still for readers to care what happens to them.

Unfortunately, I found this to be the case here. Both characters begin their interaction by feeding the other a lie. I was initially okay with this as the basis for the story, but now I realize that my “permission” was predicated on being able to otherwise like them. But I found Blake so unappealing in the first chapters that I didn’t want to hang around him—not even in the pages of a book. He consistently drank too much, exhibited selfish motives at every turn, and was an inattentive dad as well as a cheating husband (and lover). Ella was somewhat more sympathetic as the jilted wife, but even she engaged in behaviors that lost my sympathy. Her actions on the night of the Debacle, for instance.

This lack was eventually helped, a little, by the introduction of Mimi, a fairly appealing secondary character. But for me, it fell short. While I thought the story’s premise was promising (which was what made me want to read it in the first place), it wasn’t enough to win me over. In the end, I couldn’t believe that these two characters could create anything permanent based on the foundation they were building on. Even when the truth comes out—as it almost always must—what remained felt as unsubstantial as a house of cards.

I have enjoyed a Patti Callahan Henry novel or two—most notably, *The Stories We Tell*—and will hope for better the next time around.

Thanks to St. Martin’s Press for providing me a free copy to review. All opinions are mine.

Debbie Sweeney says

Did not finish. Not my cup of tea. Why must adults start off with lies to each other??? Sorry but are we not more evolved than this? Honestly-juvenile.

Jencey/ says

Summer brings out the list of my favorite writers and one of them is Patti Callahan Henry. This is my first time to share one of her novels. Thank you to St. Martin’s Press for a copy of *The Idea of Love*. So sit back and be ready to be enticed for a great story!

Synopsis:

Blake Hunter is looking for his next story. He writes screenplays which come to the big screen in Hollywood. There is only one problem he hasn’t had a hit in a long time. So he travels to Watersend South Carolina to see what he can find under and assumed identity of Hunter Adderman. What happens when he comes across a local woman Ella Flynn? Is she telling him the truth? Will he ultimately find his story and maybe a little romance of his own?

My Thoughts:

This is my first time to share one of Patti’s novels. I am honored for the opportunity to share *The Idea of Love*. I enjoyed the story! I have met Patti a few times over the years. I recently attended a luncheon where she described her writing process. Patti said to just see what would happen next. The novel is plotted well. I really enjoyed the character of Ella and wanted to root for her to succeed throughout the novel. I admittedly had my doubts initially about the chemistry between Hunter and Ella, but I found the conclusion interesting! I look forward to reading her next novel!

Charlotte says

<http://charlotteswebofbooks.blogspot...>

I am not going to lie, I was a little disappointed. I was hoping to be swept away and find myself rooting for the "happy ever after" - but I really wasn't sure which way was the "happy ever after" I wanted.

Henrietta says

The Idea of Love starts out with Hunter wandering in the Southern East Coast, hoping to find a good love story that may "cure" his writer's block. When he sees Ella, a sad woman sitting at a café table, he believes he's found his inspiration. But will he be able to pry into her personal life without making her become suspicious of his selfish agenda?

To be honest, I didn't know at first if I'd like a story with the protagonists lying to one another. But as I got to know Hunter and Ella, I began to understand why they're doing what they do. You may say telling lies is just plain wrong, but let's be real for a moment, can you uprightly say you've never told a lie in your entire life? In a world where deceit and dishonesty are not uncommon, I have to say I appreciate how this story is told. We all have conscience and I admire the way the characters evolve when they can no longer live with the lies that they share.

What intrigued me the most is how the characters talk about the idea of love. In the story, Ella believes she's being ruined by love. But in truth, she hasn't been brave enough to love because of her idea of love. Hunter sees the idea of love as his ticket to fame and fortune. But ironically, his life is a reflection of his neglect and ignorance of love. Both Ella and Hunter are no fools but until the moment their illusion of love is shattered, they struggle to find their true place at work and in life.

From the book blurb, it may sound like the story is heavily focused on the romance between the protagonists, but after reading the book, I can honestly share that while there is romance, it's not the mere focus of the story. Ella is pretty talented in my opinion and I love how she expresses her artistic way on paper, in home decoration and at work. As for Hunter, while his relationship with his family may seem like an eyesore, I like that he genuinely wants to change and become a better member of the family. And when he gains clarity about his life direction, I like that he applies the insights that he gathers from Ella and mends his relationship with his family.

I also love the aspect of friendship in the story. Mimi is a new friend of Ella but I think she's truly the best friend that anyone could hope to have. She's funny, caring, wise and helpful, and I love that she knows herself well enough that she doesn't need the approval of another person to lift her up and make her feel she's worthy. Unlike Ella's long-time friend Amber who constantly needs to be the center of attention, Mimi, by contrast, is wonderfully kind and thoughtful.

As you can tell, I fell in love with *The Idea of Love*. :)

I wholeheartedly recommend the story and I hope you'll like it as much as I did.

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A copy of the book was provided by publisher for review purposes.
